



## 96TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### State of Illinois

2009 and 2010

HB2591

Introduced 2/20/2009, by Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia

#### SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act

Creates the Virtual Public Schools Act. Defines "virtual school" as an independent public school in which the school uses technology in order to deliver a significant portion of instruction to its students via the Internet in a virtual or remote setting. Requires the virtual school to be evaluated annually by its sponsor. Sets forth requirements for students of the virtual schools. Sets forth requirements and prohibitions for the virtual school. Provides that each virtual school teacher must be qualified to teach in this State under existing law. Provides that any student who meets State residency requirements may enroll in a virtual school.

LRB096 09713 NHT 19876 b

FISCAL NOTE ACT  
MAY APPLY

STATE MANDATES  
ACT MAY REQUIRE  
REIMBURSEMENT

A BILL FOR

1 AN ACT concerning education.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**  
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the  
5 Virtual Public Schools Act.

6 Section 5. Findings.

7 (a) The General Assembly finds and declares all of the  
8 following:

9 (1) Meeting the educational needs of children in our  
10 State's schools is of the greatest importance to the future  
11 welfare of this State.

12 (2) Closing the achievement gap between  
13 high-performing students, including the gap between  
14 minority and non-minority students, and between  
15 economically disadvantaged students and their more  
16 advantaged peers is a significant and present challenge.

17 (3) Providing a broader range of educational options to  
18 parents and utilizing existing resources, along with  
19 technology, may help students in our State improve their  
20 academic achievement.

21 (4) Many of our school districts currently lack the  
22 capacity to provide other public school choices for  
23 students whose schools are low performing.

1 (b) The General Assembly further finds and declares that  
2 virtual schools established in this Act:

3 (1) provide Illinois families with an alternative  
4 choice to access additional educational resources in an  
5 effort to improve academic achievement; and

6 (2) must be recognized as public schools and provided  
7 equitable treatment and resources as any other public school  
8 in this State.

9 Section 10. Definitions. As used in this Act:

10 "Sponsor" means the public school district, charter school  
11 board, or State department having a fiduciary responsibility  
12 for the operation of the virtual school.

13 "Virtual school" means an independent public school in  
14 which the school uses technology in order to deliver a  
15 significant portion of instruction to its students via the  
16 Internet in a virtual or remote setting.

17 Section 15. Accountability requirements.

18 (a) A virtual school must be evaluated annually by its  
19 sponsor based on the following criteria:

20 (1) The extent to which the virtual school demonstrates  
21 increases in student achievement according to the goals of  
22 its authorizing contract and State academic standards.

23 (2) The accountability and viability of the virtual  
24 school, as demonstrated by its academic, fiscal, and

1 operational performance.

2 (b) Each virtual school student shall have access to a  
3 sequential curriculum that meets or exceeds this State's  
4 academic standards and that has an interactive program with  
5 significant online components.

6 (c) Each virtual school student must be required to have  
7 900 hours of learning opportunities per academic year, or the  
8 student must demonstrate mastery or completion of appropriate  
9 subject areas.

10 (d) Each virtual school student must be assessed regularly  
11 in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

12 (e) For each family with a student enrolled in a virtual  
13 school, the virtual school shall do the following:

14 (1) provide instructional materials;

15 (2) ensure access to necessary technology such as a  
16 computer and printer; and

17 (3) ensure access to an Internet connection used for  
18 schoolwork.

19 (f) Virtual schools are prohibited from providing  
20 allotments to students or families to purchase instructional  
21 programs or materials. Nothing in this subsection (f) prohibits  
22 virtual schools from reimbursing families for costs associated  
23 with their Internet connection for use in the virtual school  
24 program.

25 Section 20. Teachers. Each virtual school teacher must be

1 qualified to teach in this State under existing law.

2 Section 25. Offices and facilities. A virtual school shall  
3 maintain an administrative office within this State where its  
4 sponsor is located, which shall be considered its principal  
5 place of business.

6 Section 30. Open enrollment. Any student who meets State  
7 residency requirements may enroll in a virtual school.